

DERBYSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

**CABINET MEMBER FOR CHILDREN AND
YOUNG PEOPLE**

6 May 2014

Report of the Strategic Director for Children & Younger Adults

Participation in the 'Family Values' Programme

1. Purpose of Report

To seek Cabinet Member approval for the participation of Derbyshire County Council's Children and Younger Adults (CAYA) department in the 'Family Values' Programme.

2. Information and Analysis

2.1 Context and current position

Derbyshire County Council (DCC) currently employs over 400 foster carers. Sufficient numbers of high quality foster carers are essential to ensuring that children in our care who are best suited to living in a family home are able to do so, and to ensure a diversity of foster carers and potential adopters to best meet the needs of both children and carers. CAYA is also pioneering a number of innovations which are improving experience and outcomes for children in care as part of the Uni-fi initiative. One such innovation is the current piloting of an endowment for children in care – a flexible, personal budget held by the young person and their carer to put young people in control of the key decisions in their life, and provide them with the resources to fulfil their ambitions. A key determinant of enabling such a scheme to be scaled to all children in care in Derbyshire would be an adequate number of high quality foster carers.

As DCC does not have sufficient numbers or diversity of foster carers, some children and young people are placed with independent providers of fostering services, or in residential placements. This is more expensive than foster care, and in some cases is not the ideal placement for the child. Despite marketing campaigns, such as television advertising, and the commissioning of PR support with recruitment, the conversion rate from enquiries about becoming a foster carer to appointment is less than 10%. Furthermore, in 2013/14 the numbers of foster carers leaving DCC (48) is greater than the numbers that have been recruited (42).

The approach taken by DCC has not been reviewed for a number of years.

As such, DCC's approach requires modernisation and action in response to emerging learning about what works in terms of recruiting and retaining high quality foster carers and potential adopters. Expertise is required in order to achieve this, and as such it is proposed that DCC engages an appropriately expert service partner to improve progress, by participating in the evidence driven 'Family Values' programme.

2.2 'Family Values' Programme Approach

The 'Family Values' programme works with councils to transform fostering and adoption through use of customer insight approaches. The programme is co-ordinated by iMPower, an established service partner working children's services departments across the country. They are working with the charities The Fostering Network and Coram, and also with Loughborough University's Centre for Child and Family Research, who offer challenge and support through a Programme Reference Group.

The Programme works with a number of councils in each wave of the programme to:

- Focus on the values of foster carers and adopters to transform fostering and adoption recruitment;
- Change understanding and behaviours of staff regarding foster carers and adopters;
- Provide a sector-led programme, not directed by central government;
- Establish a deliverable plan for annual savings for each council, typically of at least £500k p.a.

The work involves a local on-site team, joint learning across the programme network, access to national data and participation in national events. Participating councils pay a fee of £95,000 and commit resources for a four month project, with an expectation that locally driven implementation immediately follows. The approach starts with an understanding of the 'customer' and uses this to develop tools and techniques for creating a customer-led targeting strategy, practical improvement plan and business case. An example of the expected results is that of a County Council participating in the first wave of the programme which is on track to recruit almost 90 foster carers. This will represent a net gain of 45 foster carers against a net loss of 11 in 2011/12.

It is anticipated that 2 clusters of councils will participate in the next wave of the programme commencing in May 2014; these include Derby City Council in the East Midlands, and the Wirral in a North West cluster.

2.3 Proposed action

It is proposed that DCC joins the 'Family Values' programme, commencing in May 2014.

3. Financial Considerations

In April 2012, Cabinet approved the creation of a Uni-fi reserve fund, from CAYA underspend, to enable the development and delivery of a range of innovations to improve experience and outcomes for children in care. This enabled the creation of a small team to deliver critical activity, and the resources to pilot, test and evaluate a range of approaches to enable the transformation of the council's role as corporate parent. Whilst DCC's fee to participate in the programme would continue to be negotiated, the fee (usually £95,000) would come from the Uni-fi reserve.

4. Other Considerations

In preparing this report the relevance of the following factors has been considered – prevention of crime & disorder, equality of opportunity; and environmental, health, human resources, legal & human rights, property and transport considerations.

5. Background Papers

Cabinet, April 2012, 'Development of Uni-fi Initiative to improve educational outcomes for Children in Care'.

6. Key Decision?

No.

7. Call-in

It is not required that the Call-in period be waived in respect of the decisions being proposed within this report.

8. Strategic Director's Recommendation

It is proposed that:

- DCC joins the 'Family Values' programme, commencing in May 2014;
- The fee for participating in the programme is paid from the Uni-fi reserve.

Ian Thomas
Strategic Director for Children & Younger Adults